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OFFICE OF KEN FRY, M.P.
MEMBER FOR FRASER

KEN FRY, THE MEMBER FOR FRASER, SAID TODAY THAT HE WAS APPROACHING THE R.S.L. AND THE MINISTER FOR IMMIGRATION WITH A PROPOSAL THAT THEY SHOULD SPONSOR REFUGEES FROM EAST TIMOR TO COME TO AUSTRALIA.

MR. FRY SAID THAT HE KNEW MANY RANK AND FILE MEMBERS OF THE R.S.L. WHO HAD SERVED IN EAST TIMOR DURING WORLD WAR 11 WERE SYMPATHETIC TO THEIR PLIGHT AND WERE DISAPPOINTED THAT THE R.S.L. HAD NOT GIVEN SUPPORT IN THEIR STRUGGLE FOR SELF DETERMINATION.

HE BELIEVED MANY AUSTRALIANS HAD A GUILT FEELING ABOUT THE WAY WE HAD TURNED OUR BACKS ON THE TIMORESE WHEN THEY HAD LOOKED TO US FOR SUPPORT.

ONLY A FEW HOURS BEFORE THE AUSTRALIAN JOURNALISTS WERE KILLED BY THE INDONESIANS AT BALIBO IN 1975, EAST TIMORESE LEADERS STILL NURSED THE HOPE THAT AUSTRALIA WOULD COME TO THEIR AID, AT LEAST BY INSISTING THAT THE QUESTION BE REFERRED TO THE UNITED NATIONS SECURITY COUNCIL.

MR. FRY SAID THAT EVEN AT THIS LATE HOUR IT WOULD BE A SIGNIFICANT GESTURE BY THE R.S.L. TO PROMOTE THE SPONSORSHIP OF EAST TIMOR REFUGEES THROUGH THEIR MEMBERS AND HE HAS SENT A TELEGRAM TO THE NATIONAL PRESIDENT OF THE R.S.L., MR. BILL KEYES, WHO IS PRESENTLY CHAIRING THE R.S.L. NATIONAL CONGRESS IN PERTH.

PARLIAMENT OF AUSTRALIA
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

11 September 1979

The Hon M J R MacKellar
Minister for Immigration and Ethnic Affairs
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

My dear Minister,

Following recent visits to Lisbon and Darwin where I had discussions with East Timor refugees, it became apparent that many refugees in Portugal, and Timorese nationals in East Timor who wish to migrate to Australia, do not qualify under the existing guidelines.

Consequently, when relatives' applications are refused there is very deep disappointment especially in the light of the special consideration being extended to Vietnamese refugees.

I would like to suggest that at least some of these problems could be overcome by:

(i) a general broadening of the family reunion guidelines

(ii) sponsorship guidelines to be broadened to include sponsorship by an ethnic friend in Australia

(iii) acceptance of sponsorship by a non-ethnic friend with the support of organisations who have a legitimate interest in East Timor, such as the R.S.L.

Because of the casualties suffered by the people of Portuguese East Timor in assisting Australian forces in World War II, reported to be 40,000 killed, I believe that there is a strong moral case for special consideration to be given to migrants and refugees from East Timor which would be supported by a majority of Australians.

I have already made representations to the R.S.L. to have this matter discussed at their National Conference now taking place in Perth.

In view of the special wartime relationship of Australia and Portuguese East Timor and the relatively small number of people involved, coupled with the extreme hardships which the people of East Timor have been subjected to at the hands of the Indonesian aggressions, I would strongly suggest a more humanitarian approach to the question of refugees and migration along the lines which I have suggested.

Your sympathetic consideration of the proposals would be appreciated.

Yours sincerely,

Ken Fry
MEMBER FOR FRASER

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